

Old Testament Foundation 5

History Part 3 – Judah Alone

The final days of the Northern Kingdom of Israel are recorded in both Kings and Chronicles. The divinely inspired writers recorded the time and events but each wrote in different circumstances and from a different perspective.

An unnamed **prophet** from the Southern Kingdom of Judah wrote the book of **Kings** to the people of Israel who were already in exile. He explained the reason for their exile and how they got there. He emphasized that their (consistent) breaking of the Covenant resulted in God's promised curses (consequences), removal from the land.

An unnamed **priest** in the lineage of Aaron wrote the book of **Chronicles** to the people of Israel who had returned to Jerusalem from exile. His purpose was to answer the questions "Does God still care about us?" and, "Can we still have a covenant relationship with God if we don't have a king or the Temple?"

A Nation Heading for Judgment

By studying both Kings and Chronicles together, a full picture is given of what happened during that period of history and how God was carrying His plan forward. Prior to the fall of the northern kingdom of Israel, God had warned the Israelites through His prophets. The book of Kings records that during the reign of King Ahab, the Lord sent Elijah. In a confrontation on Mount Carmel, Elijah met 950 prophets of Baal and Asherah. He challenged the people to choose either Baal or the Lord as their God (1 Kings 18:20, 21). After a day of high drama, the Lord showed Himself to be the one true God, yet the people still did not repent and turn back to the Lord.

After the death of Elijah, Elisha received Elijah's mantle and took his place as God's prophet (2 Kings 2). The majority of Elijah's ministry was to confront the king and the false prophets while Elisha's ministry focused more on the people as God began preparing them for the exile to come.

The kingdom of Israel refused to return to the Lord and continued in their idolatry, so God sent even more prophets to warn them of the impending disaster. In the last 25 years of Israel's kings, God sent Jonah, Amos and Hosea.

God's prophets to Israel

1. It was during the reign of king Jeroboam II that the Lord called Jonah as His prophet. He was sent first to the king with God's message to expand the territory of Israel from Lebo Hamath to the Sea of the Arabah. Jeroboam II listened and obeyed which resulted in the nation prospering. Then the Lord sent Jonah to bring His message to Nineveh, the capital of Assyria. This nation was rising rapidly as the dominant world power of their day. The Assyrians were feared for their extreme cruelty to those they captured. Jonah was sent to

preach against Nineveh because of its great wickedness. Why did the Lord send Jonah all the way to Nineveh to bring this message? (Jonah 4:11)

2. As life became better under the reign of king Jeroboam, the people soon became complacent, forgetting it was the Lord who brought them prosperity. Then, as the rich became richer they increased the oppression of the poor even to the point of enslaving their own Israelite brothers. It was into this setting that God sent His next prophet Amos. Amos had been a shepherd in the hills of Tekoa when the Lord called him and sent him to Jerusalem with a message. What was the Lord's message he was to deliver? (Amos 3:11, 13 -15 & 4:1-3)
3. Even though they did not listen or turn from their evil ways, God still loved His people. After Amos, He sent Hosea to become a living parable to God's people. What did the Lord ask Hosea to do and why? (Hosea 1:2)
4. So that God could use the marriage of Hosea as a picture of how God looked at his relationship with Israel, Hosea lived his married life in full view of the people. When Gomer left Hosea, what was God's instruction to Hosea and what was it to show? (Hosea 3:1)
5. According to Hosea 4:1 and 2, describe the spiritual life of God's "wife" Israel at this time.
6. At the end of Hosea's life, the Lord made a final appeal to Israel. What did He ask? (Hosea 14:1,2)
7. If they would do this, what promise did He give to them? (Hosea 14:4)

Israel chose to ignore God's prophets and continue in their disobedience for centuries. But during her last six kings she began to quickly fall apart. God sent neighboring nations against Israel, but rather than repent and turn back to the Lord, she turned to Assyria for her salvation. Later, however, when king Hoshea had second thoughts and changed allegiance to the newly strengthened nation of Egypt, Assyria came against Israel with a vengeance. They laid siege to the capital city of Samaria and three years later (722 B.C.) the city fell, the people were exiled throughout the Assyrian Empire, and the northern kingdom of Israel ceased to exist.

Judah stands alone

After watching the collapse of Israel, one would think Judah would learn a lesson from their failures yet *"even Judah did not keep the commands of the LORD their God. They followed the practices Israel had introduced."* 2 Kings 17:19

8. At the time of the fall of Israel, Ahaz was king of Judah. He had begun his reign in 735 B.C., which was 11 years prior to the fall. He had his own set of problems. Neighboring nations were harassing Judah so King Ahaz went to Assyria for assistance, deliberately choosing to trust the power of Assyria over the power of the Lord God. What else was King Ahaz doing at the time? (2 Chr. 28:1-4 & 22-25)

King Ahaz received a rating of being an evil king because he did not do what was right in the eyes of the Lord like his father David. As a result of his leadership, Judah with her Baal and Asherah worship looked like every other pagan nation around her. "Baal was the god of Canaan religion and was worshiped on altars, usually in the vicinity of Asherah sites, and his devotees also committed sexual perversions. In addition, the worship of Baal included the sacrifice of human firstborn sons, apparently in order to arouse Baal to promote the fertility of fields so there would be a plentiful harvest."

Shepherds notes 1,2 Chronicles (Broadman & Holman 1998), pg. 80.

9. When Ahaz died, his 25-year-old son Hezekiah succeeded him on the throne. What information is recorded about Hezekiah? (2 Chr. 29:1, 2)
10. How did Hezekiah get that rating? (2 Chr. 29:3-11)

11. Hezekiah is the third of Judah's four "reformer kings" with kings Asa and Jehoshaphat being the first two. God's next prophets were sent to the Southern Kingdom of Judah. Micah and Isaiah began their ministries during the reign of Ahaz and continued through his son Hezekiah and grandson Manasseh. According to Micah 3:11, in spite of Hezekiah's reforms how are the leaders of Judah described?
12. Micah pointed out what the result of their faulty thinking would be. What was the result? (Micah 3:12)
13. 2 Chronicles 32:1 says, "After all that Hezekiah had so faithfully done, Sennacherib king of Assyria came and invaded Judah." What was the Assyrian attitude toward God? (2 Chr. 32:19)
14. Sennacherib began conquering and destroying the fortified cities of Judah. After taking the city of Lachish and making it his headquarters, Sennacherib sent a threatening letter to king Hezekiah. He bragged that no god had been able to protect any nation against Assyria and not to think that their God, Yahweh, could protect them either. How did faithful king Hezekiah deal with the situation? (2 Kings 19:14-19)
15. The prophet Isaiah was sent to tell Hezekiah that the Lord had heard his request. How did the Lord answer His prayer? (2 Kings 19:35, 36)
16. A description is given of king Hezekiah as one who "trusted in the LORD, the God of Israel. There was no one like him among all the kings of Judah either before him or after him" 2 Kings 18:5. It is sad to read that with such a wonderful, godly father, his son, king Manasseh, was rated one of the most evil kings in the Bible. A list of Manasseh's sins is given in 2 Chr. 33:3 – 8 and include rebuilding of high places, building altars to Baal and Asherah, worshiping the starry hosts, building a pagan altar and setting up idols in the Lord's Temple. He was also involved in child sacrifice, sorcery, divination, witchcraft, mediums and spiritists. What was God's final assessment of king Manasseh? (2 Chr. 33:9)

17. Due to Manasseh's open defiance of the Lord, Judah was disciplined by making her a vassal of Assyria. As the people of Judah cried out from under the oppressive hand of the Assyrians, the Lord sent His word through the prophet Nahum. What message did the Lord send? (Nahum 1:7-9)
18. Toward the end of his reign king Manasseh was taken prisoner to Assyria. While he was in chains and shackles he finally repented of his sins and returned to the Lord. The Lord had mercy on Manasseh and he was returned to Jerusalem and his kingdom. Unfortunately, the 55-year reign of evil had done irreparable damage. His son Amon succeeded him, but reigned less than two years before his own official assassinated him. Then, Amon's son Josiah was made king. What information is given about Josiah? (2 Chr. 34:1,2)
19. In 2 Chr. 34:3a it says, "In the 8th year of his reign, while he was still young (Josiah was 16) he began to seek the God of his father David." As Josiah sought the Lord, the prophet Zephaniah was sent to him. Summarize the words Zephaniah brought to his young king. (Zeph. 1:4-7)
20. With God's message of judgment ringing in his ears, what words of encouragement was Zephaniah able to bring to king Josiah? (Zeph. 2:3)

21. Josiah listened and “In the 12th year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of high places, Asherah poles, carved idols and cast image. Under his direction the altars of the Baals were torn down ... and so he purged Judah and Jerusalem” 2 Chr. 34:3b-5. During this time of clean up, a copy of the Law of Moses was found in the Temple. Upon reading it, Josiah renewed the covenant with the Lord, then continued his reform with even more vigor. (Josiah is the 4th and final reformer.) What is recorded about him in 2 Kings 23:25?

The downward spiral of Judah

During the reign of Josiah, the Lord had called a new prophet by the name of Jeremiah. Jeremiah was told that before he was even formed in his mother’s womb God knew him and had set him apart as a prophet to the nations. He would remain God’s primary prophet through the fall of Jerusalem and on into exile, Jeremiah 1:1-5.

22. King Josiah’s tragic and unnecessary death occurred when he tried to stop the Egyptian army that was traveling north through Judah. Upon his death the people made his younger son Jehoahaz king. He reigned only 3 months, why? (2 Kings 23:33,34)
23. Josiah’s older son Eliakim, renamed Jehoiakim was then made king and became a vassal to Egypt. Again it is sad to see that these two sons of a godly king like Josiah were rated as evil in the eyes of the Lord. So once again the Lord sent Jeremiah to Jerusalem with a message. Summarize what he told the people of Jerusalem. (Jer. 26:4-6)
24. But king Jehoiakim and the people did not listen or obey. What was the result?
- (2 Kings 24:1
 - Daniel 1:1-7
25. This first deportation of leadership and Judah’s best and brightest young men was a strong warning from the Lord. Yet, even then, He remained patient, wanting His children to repent and return to Him. But their hearts remained hard, so a second time Nebuchadnezzar came and laid siege to Jerusalem. Jehoakim died during the siege and his 18-year-old son Jehoiachin became king.
- How long did Jehoiachin reign? (2 Kings 24:8)

- What was his rating? (2 Kings 24:9)
26. Summarize how Jehoiachin's reign ended. (2 Kings 24:10-17)
27. Verse 17 says that Nebuchadnezzar "made Mattaniah, Jehoiachin's uncle, king in his place and changed his name to Zedekiah." Zedekiah became the third son of king Josiah to reign. By now two groups of Judahites had been deported to Babylon and only the poorest people were left in the land Judah. Zedekiah became a "puppet king" for Babylon and received a rating of evil in the eyes of the Lord. "Now Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon so in the 9th year of Zedekiah's reign, on the 10th day of the 10th month, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon marched against Jerusalem with his whole army. He encamped outside the city and built siege works all around it" 2 Kings 24:20b-25:1. Apparently Zedekiah hadn't learned from his brothers or nephew, so a third time Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to Jerusalem. What message did the LORD send Zedekiah through Jeremiah? (Jer. 27:12)
28. Zedekiah chose to ignore Jeremiah's message, but as the siege continued, he sent word to Jeremiah to inquire of the Lord. This time he was hoping for a different answer, one that would be like the one Hezekiah received during the siege of Jerusalem by Assyria. But Hezekiah had sought the Lord with his whole heart Zedekiah did not. What was the Lord's reply? (Jer. 21:1-7)
29. God's answer regarding the city was very clear. But Jeremiah had another message for the people of Jerusalem. What was that message? (Jer. 21:8-10)
30. The Lord continued to send His warning through Jeremiah and some individuals listened, most did not. It was in the 4th month of the 11th year of Zedekiah's reign the Babylonians army broke through the city walls and Jerusalem fell to Babylon (July 586 B.C.). King Zedekiah and the army fled in the night through a gate in the wall. What happened then? (2 Kings 25:5-7)

31. Jerusalem was now under Babylonian control. According to 2 Chronicles 36:15-17 why did this happen?

32. What did that mean for:

- The city of Jerusalem (2 Chr. 36:18, 19)
- The people who had survived? (2 Chr. 36:20)

The Lord had forewarned His people when He took them out of slavery in Egypt, that if they did not obey Him, they would eventually lose the land and be returned to slavery. These words of the Lord were fulfilled 1,062 years, 6 months and 10 days after the Passover of the Exodus as the people were taken into Babylonian captivity. Dates by 1st century historian Josephus

33. The Lord said it would remain this way until the land received all the Sabbath years' rest the Israelites had not observed. How long would God give the land rest? (2 Chr. 36:21)

34. Prior to their leaving, the Lord had given them a promise to hold on to, a promise that gave them a future and a hope. What was that promise? (Jer. 31:23, 31-34)